

**Clerk of Court**  
George E. Schaefer

**Chief Deputy**  
Thomas A. Larson

**Executive Assistant**  
Cheryl Dougherty

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



## OFFICE OF THE CLERK FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT NORFOLK CIRCUIT COURT

100 Saint Paul's Boulevard  
Norfolk, Virginia 23510  
(757) 664-4580

### Supervising Deputies

**Criminal**  
Gerald L. Stokes

**Law and Chancery**  
DaVida M. Davis

**Licenses, Permits and  
Finance**  
Joseph M. Rubino

**Wills, Estates and  
Deeds**  
Anthony Fuller

To: The Honorable City Council Members and City Manager  
From: George Schaefer, Clerk of Circuit Court

CC: Budget Director, Circuit Court Chief Judge

Subj: Annual State of the Circuit Court Clerk's Office Report

Date: February 15, 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Circuit Court Clerk's Office has had a whirlwind year. As you can imagine, with over 900 statutory requirements and 19 staff members short of the Compensation Board's staffing study, this office stays busy.

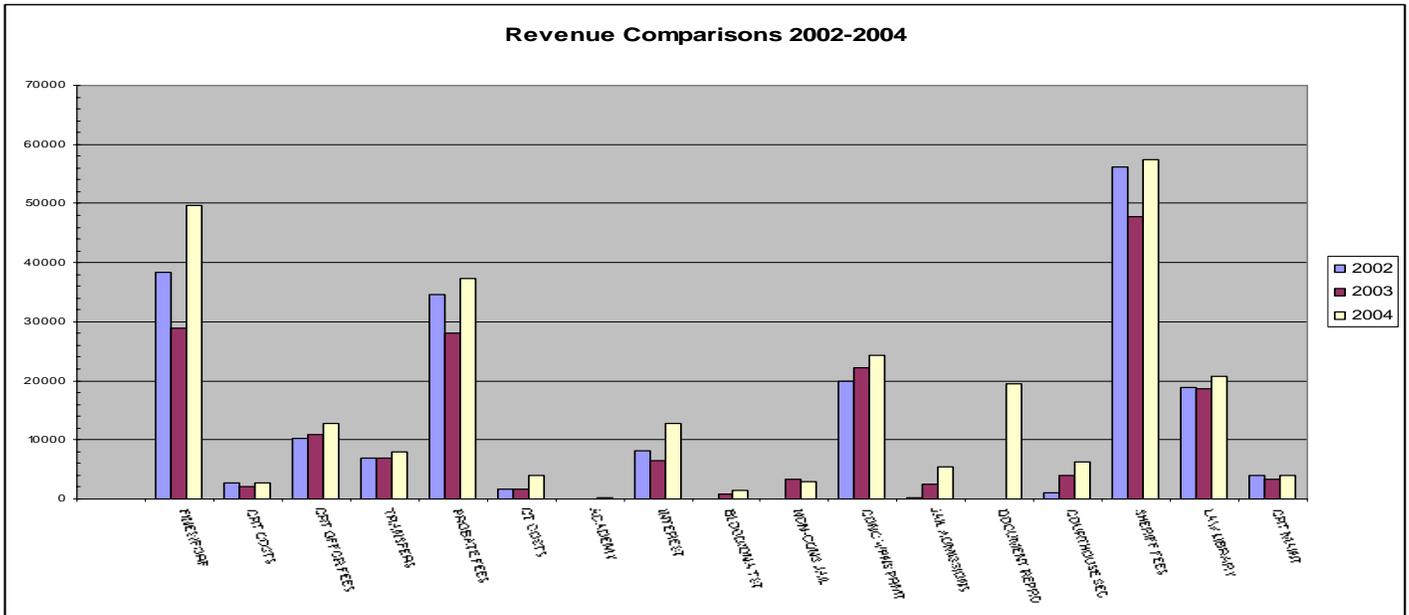
Understanding that funding is not likely to be appropriated for these positions, and realizing our role in City government, we are making every effort to maximize the use of technology thereby increasing the efficiency of my staff.

We are reviewing every process within the Clerk's Office to streamline operations while maintaining statutory compliance. This is no small task and does not come with an easy fix. We trust the steps we are taking will maintain or increase current service levels to our citizen customers and maximize the revenue generated for both the Commonwealth and the City.

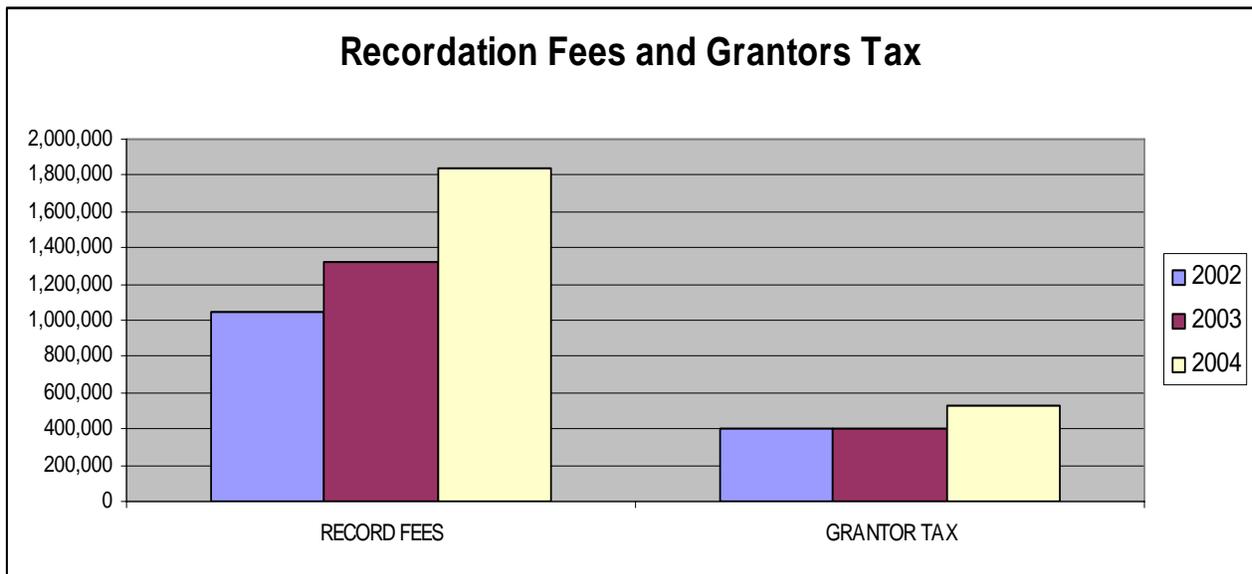
Citing a few examples:

Previously, a private vendor was allowed to provide copy services to the general public. I requested information from the company on their revenues and a copy of the contract. We were told there was no contract and that revenues were \$36,000 to \$54,000. Since no contract existed to provide these services, I ended the relationship, installed self service copiers, assigned account codes to over 200 attorneys, title search companies, etc. and staffed a *Copy Center* to assist the public. This step alone has realized a \$100,000.00 increase in revenue. Similarly, we began deducting the actual costs for the copiers (lease, maintenance, paper) from the copy account prior

to sending the funds to the state. This shows an additional \$33,600 savings in our line item expense budget per year.



I instituted a review of our costs worksheet to ensure that ALL monies due the locality and Commonwealth are aggressively applied to the appropriate accounts and accurately recorded. 2002 and 2003 were relatively similar in receipts; however, 2004 shows a dramatic increase in most areas. Our efforts resulted in a net increase of approximately \$800,000.00 to the city treasury.



2003 saw a cutback in the hours of operation for the Circuit Court Clerk's Office with no reduction in expenses. Beginning with my term, I changed the hours my office is open to the public making the Clerk's Office accessible 8 hours per day from 8:45 am to 4:45 pm.

Previously, all documents were stored in paper format throughout the courthouse and in a remote storage location. All documents were retrieved from the remote storage location and placed on site, reducing our monthly expenditures for off-site storage. Furthermore, I have directed my staff to begin digitizing files immediately and creating one microfilm copy (for the Library of Virginia) and one CD for the Courts use. We have negotiated and received, from the Supreme Court of Virginia, a new document file server to allow electronic storage of documents for easier and faster access. This procedure could result in a net savings of roughly \$2 Million in construction costs due to reduced space requirements for file storage in the new courthouse.

I have implemented Remote Online Access to Circuit Court Records at zero cost. We currently have records dating back to 1993 for Judgments, Marriage Licenses, Concealed Weapons Permits, etc. Our Land Records currently date back to 1989 with more records being added daily. We continue to work on ways to utilize technology to improve the filing of Land Records.

In partnership with the Supreme Court of Virginia we hope to soon provide e-filing services for some of the documents associated with our court records. Along these lines, we are procuring *digital signature* capability to allow secure filing of legal documents. This will allow us to move toward our goal of a *paperless* courthouse.

We applied and were granted status as a Passport Acceptance Facility by the United States Department of State. We offer passport services, to include passport photos, 8 hours per day, every day we are open for business. We began this service in September 2004 and have processed 59 passport applications during the last quarter of 2004. We expect this number to increase as the City moves toward additional travel and tourist opportunities.

Overall the cash flow through this office for 2004 was in excess of \$60 Million. This is a large sum of money for an office with no true security. Upon taking office on January 1, 2004, I requested a security assessment of the Clerk's Office from Sheriff McCabe, as he is responsible for courthouse security. The security assessment revealed many flaws. We have corrected those areas within our ability, (i.e. re-keyed locks, installed magnetic access control system tied to the Central Plant, locked doors, etc.) Facilities maintenance staff developed plans to correct the security issues, but in light of the planned new courthouse, extensive renovations to the existing courthouse may not be appropriate. In lieu of that, I requested a uniformed Deputy Sheriff be stationed inside my office. Unfortunately, Sheriff McCabe informed me he does not have sufficient staff now and cannot afford to reassign a deputy from current duties. Thus, I will be requesting funds be made available in the upcoming budget to allow the Sheriff to staff this position for my office.

Thanks to the partnership this office has with Council members and the City, I was able to offer increased salaries allowing me to recruit and retain an exceptional staff. Holding my staff accountable to higher standards afforded by higher pay has paid great dividends. I demand 90% effort – 100% of the time from my staff, enforcing this with both incentives and a tiered discipline system. Our “numbers” continue to improve and I trust that our relationship with municipal leadership and our citizens will continue to grow stronger.

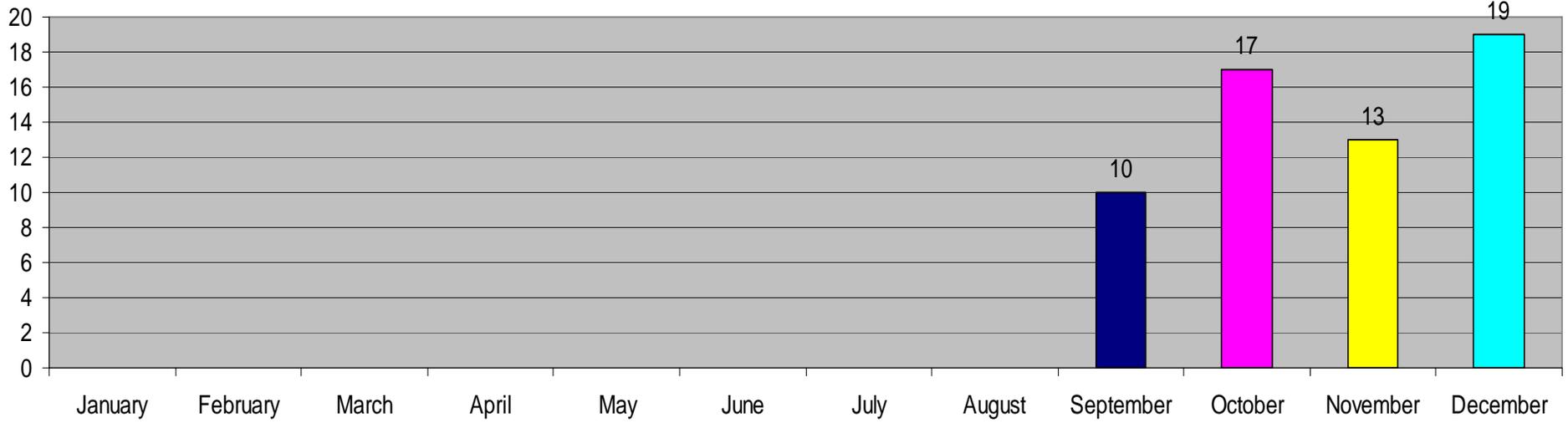
Please find attached statistics from 2004. I have included, as a part of this package, graphs that we employ to determine the ebb and flow of the activities at the courthouse. This gives us the ability to manage our staff efficiently and foresee problem areas.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to a *true* partnership between the Circuit Court and the City we serve.

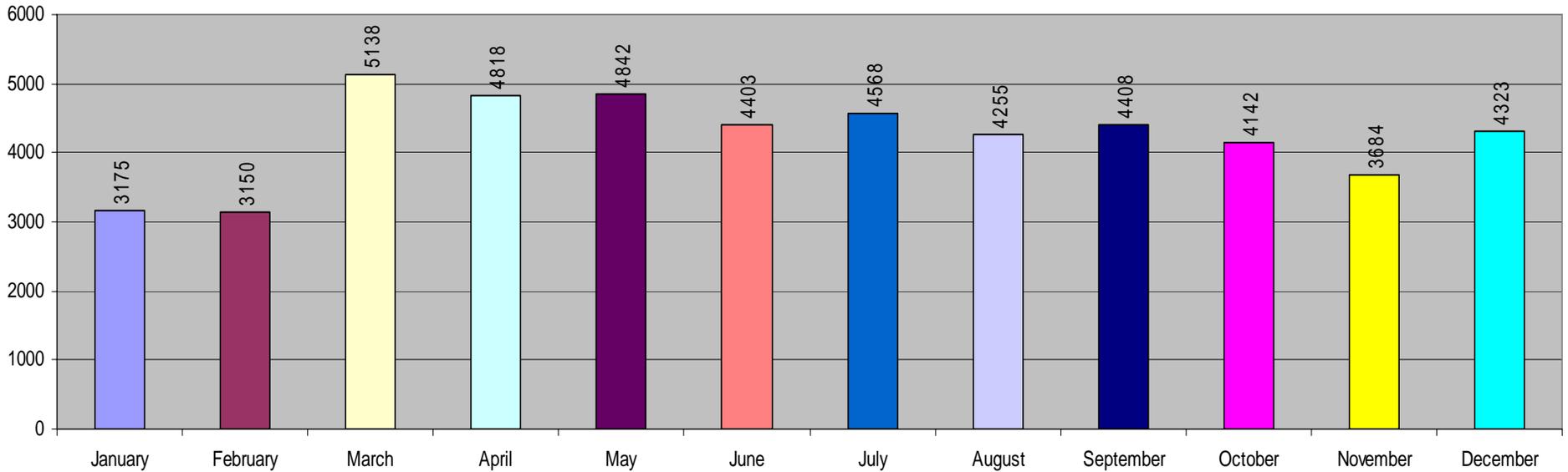
Very truly yours;

George E. Schaefer  
Clerk of Circuit Court

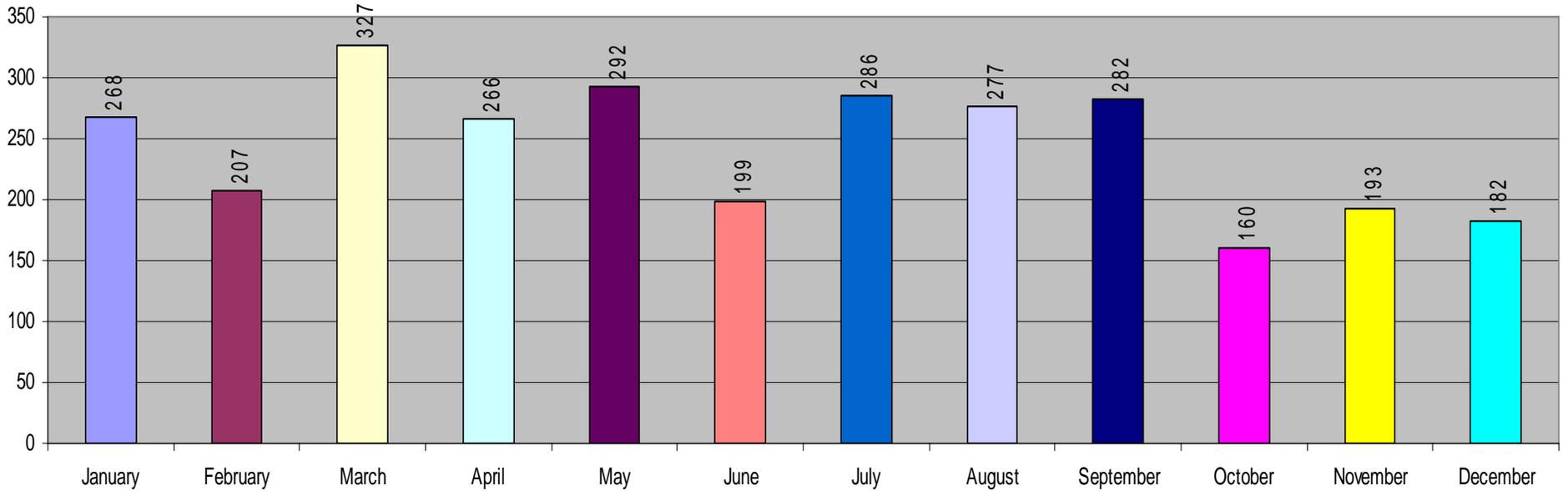
Passports



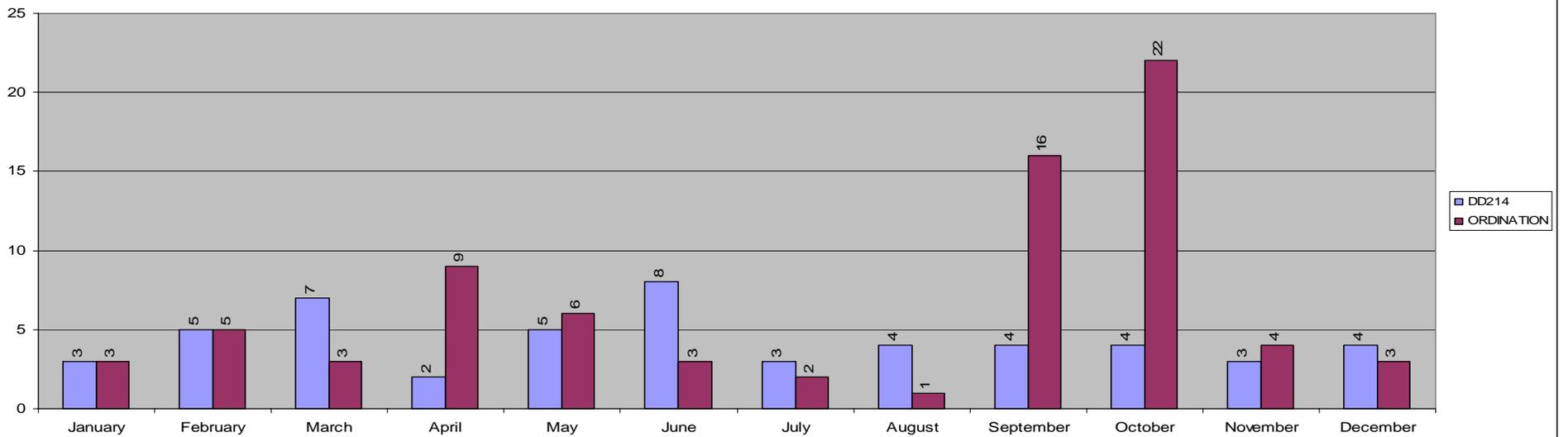
2004 Land Records



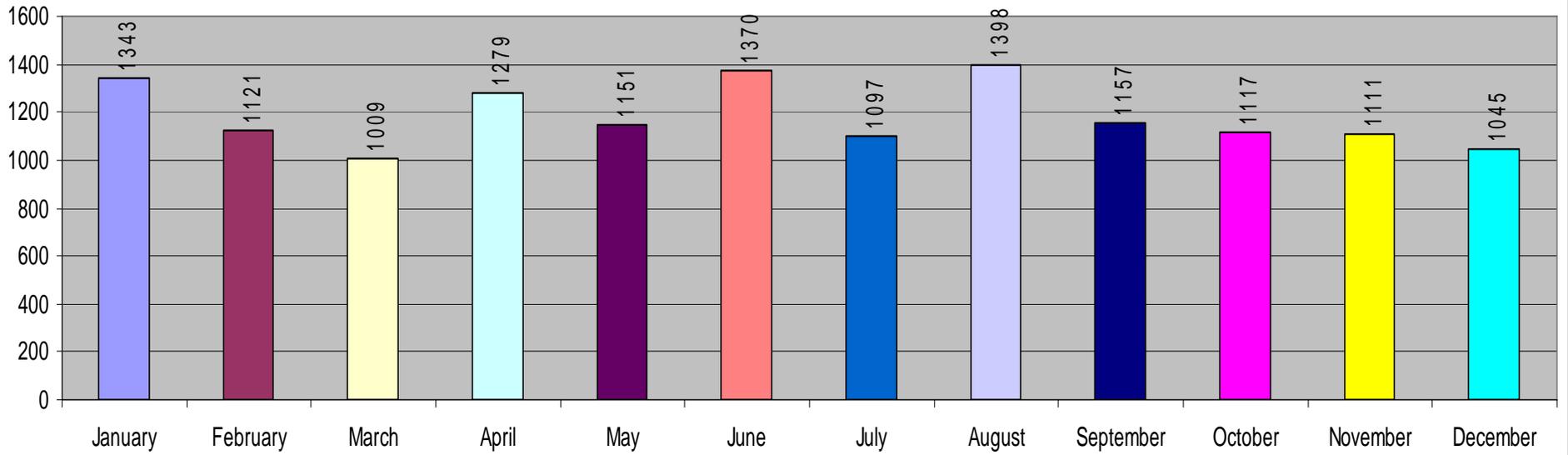
### Will Documents Executed



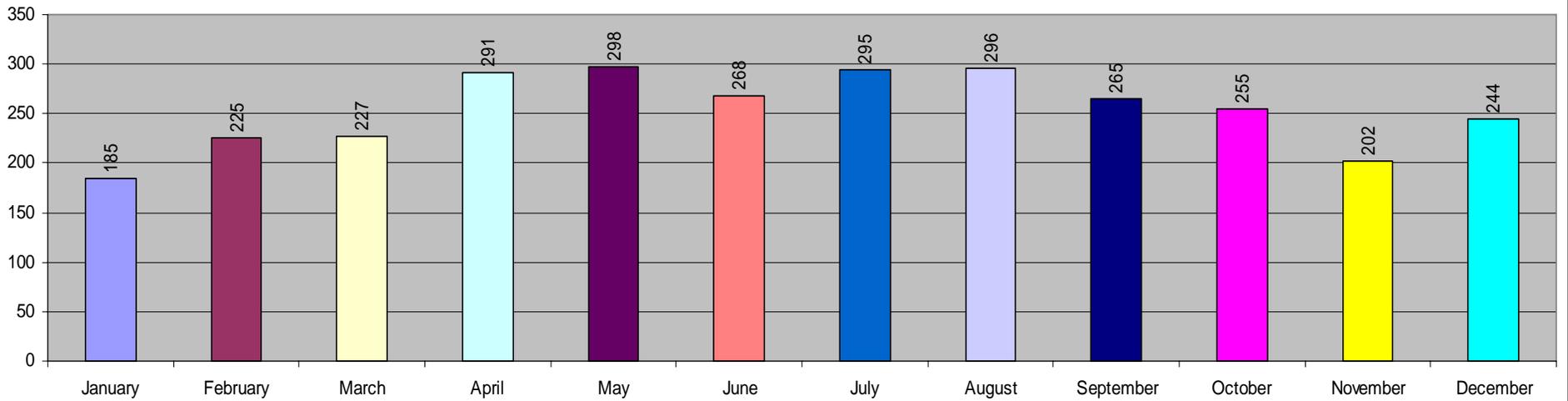
### 2004 - DD214 & Ordinations

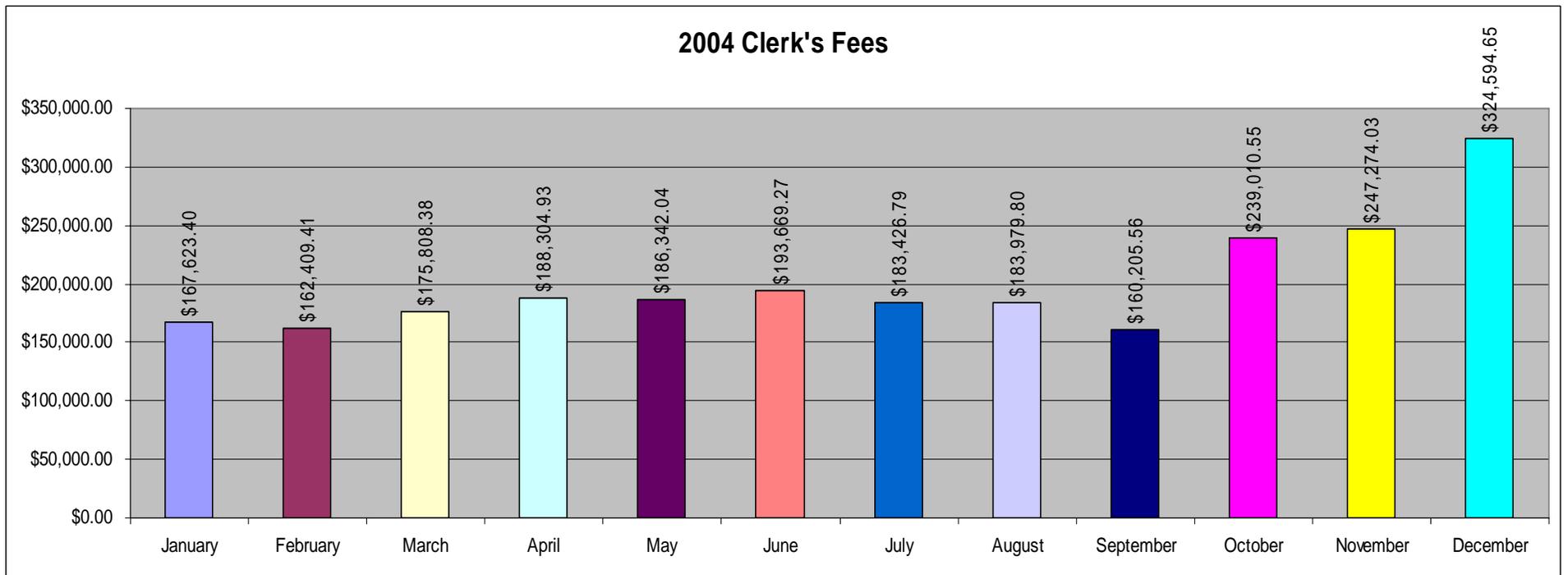
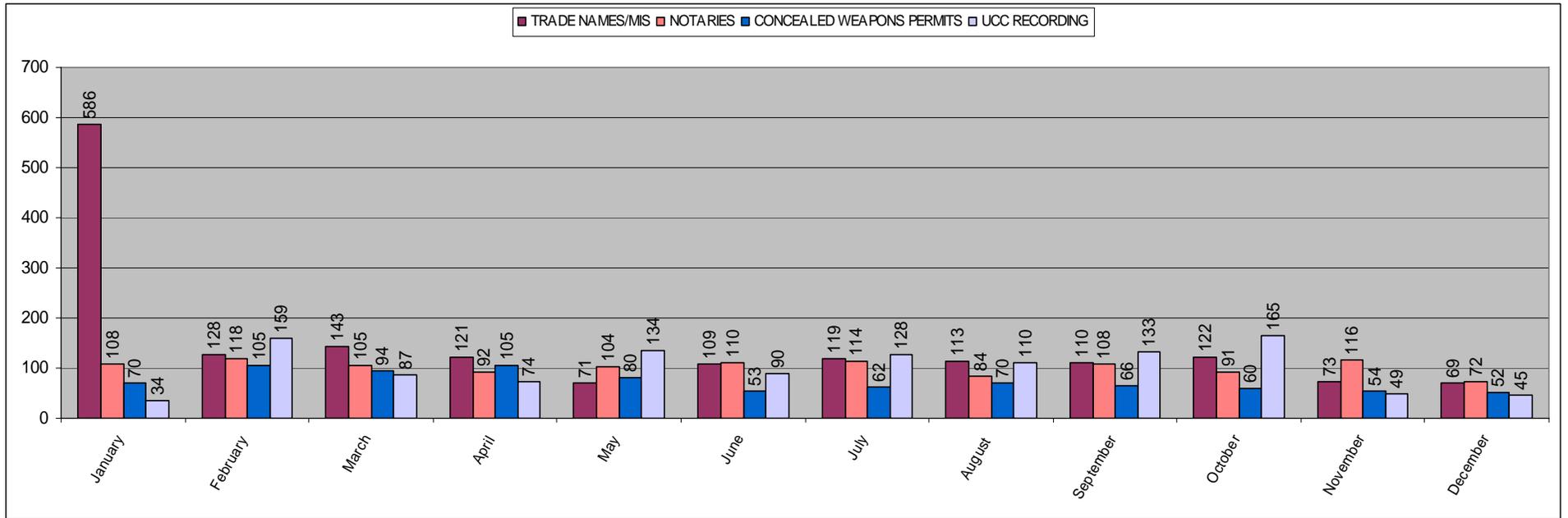


### 2004 Judgements

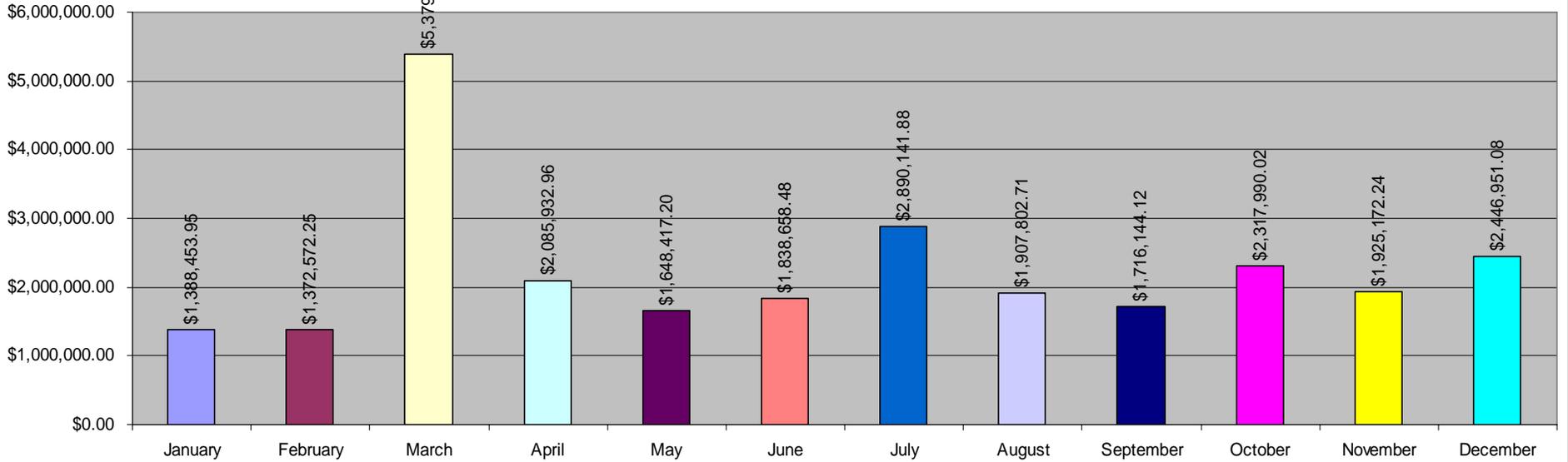


### 2004 Marriage Licenses

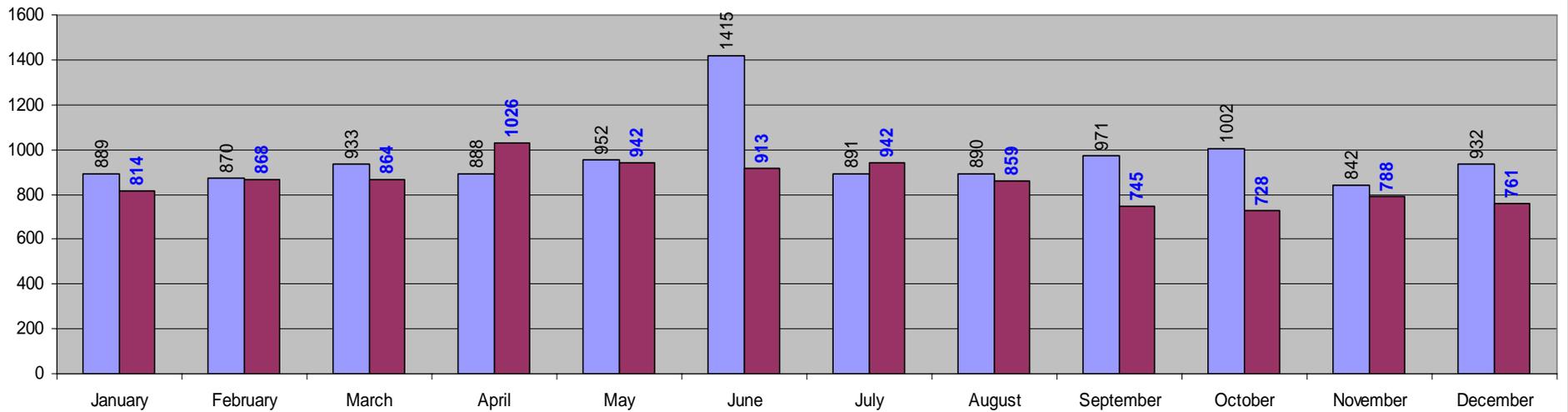




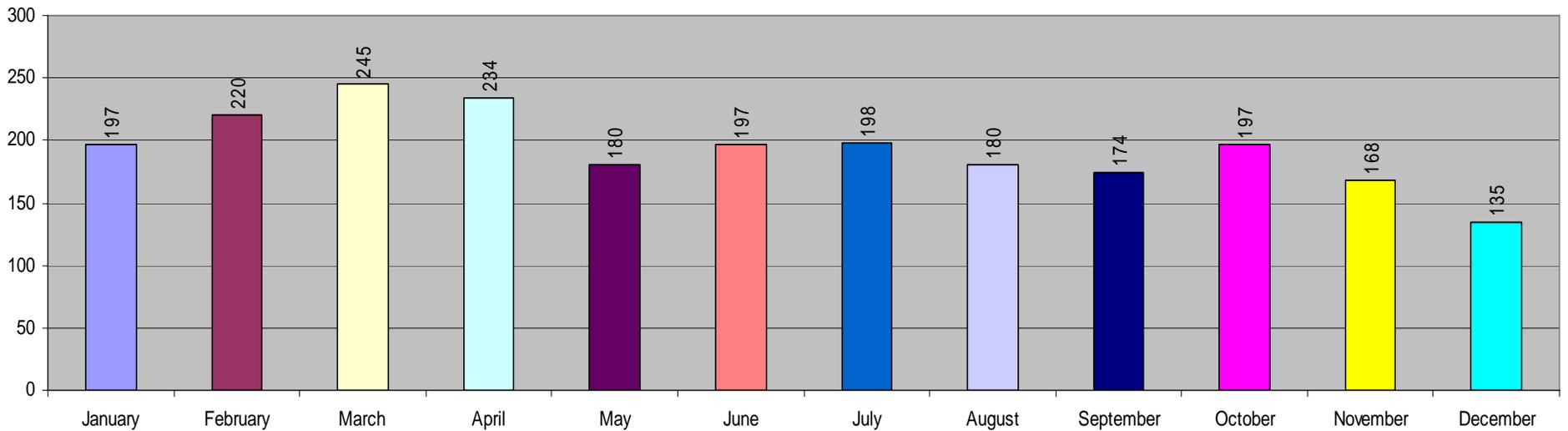
### 2004 Receipt Totals



### 2004 Total Criminal Cases Commenced/Concluded



### 2004 Civil Suits Filed



### 2004 Divorces Filed

